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THE TRAINING OF GERMAN TEACHERS IN THE U.S., A POSITION PAPER (DRAFT).

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THE TRAINING OF GERMAN TEACHERS TODAY LEAVES SO MUCH TO BE DESIRED THAT THE MAJORITY OF THEM EMPLOYED AND CERTIFIED TO TEACH GERMAN IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS ARE UNQUALIFIED TO DO SO BY ANY PROFESSIONAL STANDARD. THE ABOVE STATEMENT IS THE PREMISE OF THIS POSITION PAPER WHICH OUTLINES IN DETAIL WHAT IS NECESSARY TO REMEDY THE SITUATION. THE MOST EXTENSIVE PART OF THE PAPER INCLUDES (1) NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS OF FUTURE GERMAN TEACHERS, AND (2) GUIDELINES FOR WAYS AND MEANS OF ACHIEVING THESE QUALIFICATIONS IN TEACHER TRAINING, INCLUDING THE AREAS OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCY, LINGUISTICS, CULTURE, STUDY ABROAD, METHODS COURSES, AND INTERNSHIPS. A THIRD SECTION DESCRIBES THE ACTIVITIES OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF GERMAN IN RESEARCH AND IN DEVELOPING NATIONAL STANDARDS, AND THE FINAL SECTION OFFERS PROPOSALS FOR TEACHER CERTIFICATION. (AS)

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THE TRAINING OF GERMAN TEACHERS IN THE U.S.

A Position Paper (Draft)

by Walter F. W. Lohnes

Preamble

During the academic year 1965/66, less than half of the German teachers covered by the NCSF-MLA survey had majored in German in college, only one quarter had had a German minor, and nearly 30 percent had neither majored nor minored in German. The survey does not show how much training in German these teachers had beyond the B.A., nor does it show any other qualifications these people may have to enable them to teach German, but there is no doubt that the majority of teachers employed and certified to teach German in American schools are unqualified to do so by any professional standard.

This state of affairs represents nothing less than a national disgrace; it is damaging to American education as a whole, it shows the German profession in an oblique light, and, most of all, it hurts thousands of students who, after wasting two, three or even four years in German classes in High School, place in a second semester course in College if they do not have to start all over again.

The training of college teachers (in contrast to researchers and graduate teachers), also leaves much to be desired. Most young Ph.D.'s have to begin their career by teaching language courses; many of them spend the rest of their lives teaching undergraduates; and yet, in most institutions there are no programs to train these young men and women in one of the most important aspects of their future career. Unsupervised teaching assistantships may provide necessary staff for lower division courses, but are no substitute for adequate teacher training.

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If one compares this situation with the training of future teachers in Germany, the American system appears even more haphazard. After his university training, the future Gymnasium teacher is required to be an intern (Referendar) for two years and attend weekly seminars; he teaches under the supervision of an experienced teacher during this internship, at the end of which he has to teach a demonstration class before a committee. In America, on the other hand, almost anybody can teach German: a fifty-year old biology teacher may find himself in a German classroom, because his principal discovered that he had had two years of German as an undergraduate thirty years earlier. His German counterpart is not permitted to teach any subject for which he is not fully qualified.

The German profession, as represented by the AATG, recognizes the urgent need to remedy the unsatisfactory state of German teaching in the United States. In the following paragraphs are set forth (1) the qualifications deemed necessary for a future German teacher to fulfil his function properly and to serve the best interest of the profession, (2) a set of guidelines outlining ways and means of achieving these qualifications, (3) a description of activities of the AATG toward the development of national standards, and (4) a proposal for teacher certification by the AATG to indicate that, in the considered judgment of the profession, a candidate is satisfactorily prepared to teach German.

In order to achieve truly professional standards, comparable to those in law and medicine, it is necessary to have the cooperation of graduate departments of German, of Schools of Education and other teacher training institutions, and of the State Boards of Education and other accrediting agencies.

Graduate departments should not consider it beneath their dignity to train teachers. In addition to training literary scholars, they should give due consideration to the fact that a student, in order to work on a Ph.D., must learn German first. If beginning students are taught by competent teachers, there will be an appreciable improvement on all levels.

Schools of Education should recognize the fact that a future German teacher's language training must not stop at the end of two years. Even on the graduate level, a student needs to improve his command of German. Graduate programs in Education should therefore be closely coordinated with the programs offered in the German departments.

Accrediting agencies should accept the professional certification as a major item in the dossier of an applicant for a position. They should cooperate with the German profession in the establishment of internship programs. They should be assured by the profession that if a candidate is certified by the AATG, his qualifications conform to a well defined, highly professional national standard.

1. Qualifications of Future German Teachers

   Certification of a teacher of German shall not depend on any specific number of credit hours, but solely on his ability to demonstrate competence in the following areas:

   1.1 He shall be able to comprehend, speak, read, and write standard contemporary German with a degree of competence corresponding at least to "Good" according to the MLA definitions.

1.2 His knowledge of German shall have a theoretical foundation in Germanic linguistics.

1.3 He shall be acquainted with the basic facts of German culture, both past and present.

1.4 He shall have first-hand knowledge of contemporary Germany through controlled study in Germany under the supervision of highly qualified American teachers.

1.5 He shall have a thorough acquaintance with up-to-date teaching methods, including the teaching of intermediate and advanced classes, and shall be familiar with language laboratory techniques and other technical (electronic) teaching aids.

1.6 He shall have served as a teaching intern for at least one academic year, under close supervision by a master teacher, either as a teaching assistant in a college or university or in a grade school, junior high school or high school.

2. Guidelines for the Training of German Teachers

The numbers of the following guidelines correspond to those in Section 1 above.

2.1 Competence in the four skills on the level of "Good" cannot, even under the best of circumstances, be expected of a student after three or four semesters of language training, and yet these three or four semesters are very often the only formal language training the beginning teacher has had. Upper division courses in composition and conversation are often unsatisfactory, and literature courses taught in German will only

improve the student's listening comprehension and reading ability. The two "active" skills, speaking and writing, are sorely neglected. Those students who eventually achieve near-native fluency do so entirely on their own.

The following steps should be taken:

2.1.1 The formal study of the German language qua language must not be abandoned after the "basic" courses. Students in upper division courses, especially those majors preparing to teach, should continue formal language training up to the B.A. Pattern drills in a third or fourth-year college course can be even more useful than in a beginning course. Only through constant practice over a period of years can a student achieve an automatic command of the language.

2.1.2 Even on the graduate level, language training must be continued. Graduate departments should administer the MLA tests for Teachers and Advanced Students to all incoming students for diagnostic purposes. Those students who do not score satisfactorily should be given formal opportunity to correct their deficiencies. Courses <u>about</u> the language will not serve this purpose, though they must be part of the program (cf. 2.2). The main reason for the absence of language courses on this level seems to be psychological. Nobody wants to admit that graduate students still have to "learn the language."

2.1.3 Schools of Education and other teacher training institutions in their language education programs leading to the degrees of M.A.T., Ed.M., and Ed.D. must not neglect the language training of candidates for these degrees. It does not suffice to assume that a certain number of undergraduate German courses fulfil the requirement in subject matter training. The language competence of an M.A.T. or an Ed.M. in German should be of the same high degree as that of an M.A. in German. This training can be achieved by close cooperation and coordination with the German departments in the same institutions.

2.1.4 From the very beginning, the student should be made aware of the crucial importance in German of syntax, sentence intonation, and context. These elements are not now sufficiently stressed, even in audio-lingual texts; further steps must therefore be taken beyond the audio-lingual method to train truly competent students of German. This is particularly evident in advanced language training.

2.2 While courses in general linguistics are doubtlessly valuable to the future German teacher, training in German applied linguistics is indispensable.

2.2.1 German syntax should be an area of major concern. A thorough understanding of syntax, of which sentence intonation is an inseparable complement, is of crucial significance for anyone teaching German. A course in syntax should be required of all candidates for teaching degrees.

2.2.2 Morphology should be taught as a function of syntax.

Cf. Gerhard Kaufmann, Grammatik der deutschen Grundwortarten, München 1967, as an example.

2.2.3 A course in phonology should be closely coordinated with the student's training in phonetics.

2.2.4 All courses in linguistics should stress contrasts between English and German to point out to the students the areas of difference and difficulty in which he will have to spend his major effort when teaching German.

2.3 The teaching of culture, especially of "culture with a small c" has been a controversial subject for years. Most objections are based on the assumption that it is impossible to teach as complex a culture as German and that, at best, the students will get a superficial grasp of a random collection of insignificant data.

This assumption is patently wrong. Cultural anthropology has developed ways of describing culture that can be highly useful for the training of language teachers. Language reflects culture and vice versa, and if culture is considered as communication, then language is merely the most highly elaborated form of culture.

Also, it must be borne in mind that, for all but a very few students, language study does not lead to total comprehension of a foreign tongue, i.e. to bilingualism, - all claims to the contrary made during the last decade notwithstanding. If studying a foreign language leads to a heightened awareness of the student's own language, the aim of most language teaching is fulfilled. If culture can be taught as system-

atically as language, the same results should obtain. In The Silent Language, Edward T. Hall states: "I am convinced that all one ever gets from studying foreign culture is a token understanding. The ultimate reason for such study is to learn more about how one's own system works. The best reason for exposing oneself to foreign ways is to generate a sense of vitality and awareness--an interest in life which can come only when one lives through the shock of contrast and difference."

2.3.1 As soon as feasible, materials should be developed that will allow the teaching of German culture as described above. The description of a large number of isolated cultural phenomena, arranged in a systematic way, should provide the background against which the German language must be seen. Unless a teacher is aware of this background, he can never teach the "live" language.

2.3.2 The basic understanding of German culture should be supplemented by a basic knowledge of more formal elements of German culture: history, art and architecture, politics, economics, etc. Both 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 can best be accomplished during the period of training abroad. (Cf. 2.4.)

2.3.3 The study of German literature and Geistesgeschichte should continue to occupy a central position in the training of any Germanist. However, it should not be pursued at the expense of all other aspects of German studies.

2.4 In order to make it possible for future German teachers to gain first-hand knowledge of contemporary Germany, a German Area Center should be established in the Federal Republic of Germany. This Center should be administered by the AATG and staffed by a rotating inter-university faculty. Students would attend the Center for one semester at a suitable time during their training as German teachers.

The Center should be located near a large cultural center, but not in the city itself. It should not be connected with a German university since the training required by the American students cannot be integrated with a German curriculum. The academic program should be tailored specifically for the needs of future German teachers in the U.S.

2.4.1. Financing. The participating students would be paying the same tuition as on their home campuses. Additional support should be sought from the U.S. Government, the German Government, and from private sources both in the United States and in Germany.

2.4.2. Staffing. There should be a permanent resident director to assure administrative continuity; his term of office might be three or five years. The teaching staff should consist of two or three senior members to teach the major courses and about five junior members to teach small language drill sections.

2.4.3. Academic Program. The program of the Area Center should consist of the following three major components:

1. Intensive language training in small groups and remedial phonetics as needed. How great the need is for continued language practice can be seen from Appendix A, a sampling of errors in the final examination after a summer institute for teachers and graduate students about to start teaching.

2. The culture courses outlined in 2.3.2. and 2.3.3. It seems most reasonable to give these courses in Germany, where the entire country can serve as a "living laboratory" and where native experts are easily available.

3. An Area Studies Program to acquaint the students, on the spot, with German institutions of all sorts. This program should include visits to German schools to study methods of foreign language teaching as well as teacher training programs.

2.4.4. Work Program. The Area Center, through contacts with various German agencies, should make it possible for the students to spend a few weeks or months working and living independently in Germany, thus establishing individual contacts with Germans totally from within. The students should be placed individually, not in groups, to allow for total immersion in German life.

2.5. No candidate should be certified unless he has had a substantial course in Methods of Teaching German. General courses on how to teach Foreign Languages simply do not suffice; each language has too many methodological problems of its own, and knowing how to teach Spanish or Suaheli does not qualify one to teach German. Native Germans should not be exempted from this course; they usually need it more than native Americans.

The Methods Course should preferably be given in connection with practice teaching; it should definitely include observation of classes on all levels.

A sound Methods Course should cover the following topics:

(To follow later. I would appreciate suggestions from the Committee.)

2.6. No candidate should be certified unless he has served as a teaching intern for at least one year.

The type of internship may depend on local conditions, but whatever the conditions, each candidate should be carefully supervised and should, at the end of the program, demonstrate his ability to teach German before a group of designated evaluators.

The following represent some possible types of acceptable internship programs:

2.6.1. The intern may serve as a Teaching Assistant in a graduate department.

In order for an institution to have its T.A. program accepted as an internship program, the teaching assistants should not just be considered cheap labor (which they are not) teaching courses that nobody else wants to teach. Rather, the T.A.'s should work under the supervision of a staff member, preferably the one who also teaches the Methods Course,and their teaching should be closely controlled all along.

There should be a number of tenured staff members teaching first- and second-year courses along with the T.A.'s, from whose knowhow the T.A.'s can profit. Lover division teaching should be considered respectable and of equal importance with any other part of the total program offered by the department.

Among those teaching lover division courses, there might well be some with dual appointments in local high schools.

Each lower division course should be under the direction of one permanent staff member who should meet with all the staff involved in his course at least once a week and who would assist his T.A.'s in preparing their classes.

2.6.2. The intern may be enrolled in a teacher training program in a School of Education, requiring a year of internship in local schools.

2.6.3. If a beginning teacher has, for any reason, not had any practice teaching experience, he may, after being provisionally certified, serve his internship in a school, under the supervision of a master teacher.

2.6.4. In any kind of intern training, as much use as possible should be made of videotaping, possibly based on micro-teaching units as are being developed by Prof. Politzer at Stanford.

3. <u>The Role of the AATG</u>

The AATG, being the only national organisation serving all teachers of German, is in a unique position to further the training of German teachers in all respects.

Specifically, the AATG can assume the following tasks either by itself or by calling on qualified members or institutions:

3.1. Research and development of teaching materials, especially with an eye toward the future. It must be assumed, for instance, that within a few years programmed learning will become of major importance. Computerized teaching programs as well as computerized research in languages have already begun. The AATG should see to it that the field of German is not neglected in this respect.

3.2. Development of sample syllabi for intermediate and advanced courses, and especially the development of materials that will systematically describe contemporary German culture.

3.3. The National Headquarters of the AATG, under its Executive Secretary, should serve as the clearing house for the Area Center in Germany, cooperating with regional selection committees.

3.4. Through the GQ or some other organ like the planned Unterrichts-praxis, the AATG should systematically provide the profession with methodological articles.

3.5. The local chapters of the AATG, strengthened by an active national organization, should call regional conferences to coordinate teacher training. Such conferences might be held with representatives of a State Board of Education, of Schools of Education, graduate departments in the area, and outstanding secondary school teachers to insure smooth continuity on all levels of training.

3.6. The most important function of the AATG should be to certify German teachers. (Cf. sec. 4.)

4. National Standards and Teacher Certification

True professionalism depends on national standards set by the profession itself, which will not admit new members unless they measure up to these standards. A truism for the legal and medical professions, this statement has heretofore not been applied to language teaching.

By certifying new teachers, the AATG will publicly state that successful candidates have gone through a teacher training program set and approved by the profession as a whole.

Certification by the profession does not imply an attempt at creating a nationwide lockstep operation, but rather the necessity to assure a high level of performance of all teachers approved by the profession. Nor does it imply an infringement upon the liberty of Boards of Education and other agencies to hire teachers. However, by accepting a teaching candidate's professional certification, accrediting agencies can be assured that the candidate has demonstrated his ability to teach German.

4.1. In order to be fully certified, a candidate shall demonstrate his competence as described in sec. 2. Such competence shall be determined as follows:

4.1.1. The MLA Tests for Teachers and Advanced Students. Minimal acceptable scores should correspond to the level of "Good". These scores should become part of the candidates credentials. After a period of not less than one year, the tests may be taken again.

4.1.2. A second battery of tests, to be developed by the AATG, to test those areas of sec. 2. which, from the point of view of German, are not sufficiently covered by the MLA tests.

4.1.3. An oral examination before a regional board, consisting of (1) a senior member of the candidate's own department, (2) a representative from a second graduate department or a School of Education, (3) a representative of a State Board of Education or another accrediting agency, and (4) a senior member of the German department of a local high school.

4.1.4. A demonstration lesson with a regular college or high school class, before the same board of examiners.

4.1.5. A report by his intern supervisor.

4.2. If a candidate should be deficient in any part of the certifying prodedure, he may, upon the discretion of the regional board, be provisionally certified, and may repeat, after a period of not less than six months, those parts of the examination in which he was deficient.

4.3. Since certification does not depend on any specific number of credit hours, nor on a candidate's having majored in German, it eliminates the problem of the German minor as well as the problem of the native speaker. As long as a candidate can demonstrate proficiency in all areas, he can be certified.

4.4. In the case of FLES teachers, certain modifications of the training and certifying procedure may be made to allow for special FLES problems.